

## India - Brunei Relations

The Contacts between India and Brunei have historical and cultural roots as extension of India's relations with peninsular Malaysia and the Indonesian Island.

The diplomatic relations between India and Brunei were established in May 1984. The interest in upgrading bilateral relations started in friendly meetings between late Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and the Sultan of Brunei at CHOGM meetings, etc. In response to Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's invitation, the Sultan of Brunei paid a State visit to India in September 1992 and Indian resident diplomatic mission was opened in Brunei on 18 May, 1993. Brunei set up its High Commission in India in 12 August, 1992. By virtue of their common membership of UN, NAM, Commonwealth and ARF etc and as developing countries with strong traditional and cultural ties, Brunei and India enjoy a fair degree of commonality in their perceptions on major international issues. Brunei is supportive of India's 'Look East Policy welcomes 'Act East' policy and expansion and deepening of cooperation with ASEAN. Brunei took over as India-ASEAN Coordinator from July 2012 for three years.

The visit of the Sultan of Brunei to India in May 2008 was a landmark in India-Brunei relations. Five MoUs/Agreements were signed during the visit on BIPA, ICT, Culture, Trade and Space.

India participated at the BRIDEX (the Brunei Darussalam International Defence Exhibition & Conference) in 2009 and 2011. Indian Navy Ships INS Ranvir and INS Jyoti visited Brunei in May 2011 on goodwill visits. Indian Coast Guard Ship, Sagar, the first by a coast guard vessel, visited Brunei on 27-30 June, 2011 while INS Airavat visited Brunei on 4-9 July, 2011 to participate in the first-ever Brunei International Fleet Review to mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Royal Brunei Armed Forces. A Bruneian ship – '*KDB Darulaman*' - participated in MILAN 2012 (Andaman). This is notable as it is the first time a Bruneian naval ship ventured out of the South China Sea. Bruneian Deputy Minister of Defence visited India in 2010 and 2012 to participate in the DEFEXO exhibitions and called on Raksha Mantri and Deputy Defence Minister. INS Gharial participated in the ASEAN Plus Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief and Medical Mission Exercise (HADR & MM Ex) in Brunei on 10-22 June, 2013. Vice Admiral Anil Chopra, FOC (Eastern Naval Command) also paid a visit to Brunei in connection with the HADR & MM Exercise. ICGS Sagar visited Brunei again on 9-12 March, 2014 on goodwill visit. Indian Naval Supply Ship 'INS-Shakti' paid a goodwill visit to Brunei on 8-11 August, 2014, Vice Admiral Satish Soni, FOC Eastern Command, Indian Navy visited Brunei to coincide with the visit.

Deputy Minister of Defence, First Admiral (Rtd) Dato Abdul Aziz attended the Defexpo India 2016 in Goa March 28 to March 31, 2016.

The Indian Naval Ship (INS) Airavat led by Commander Jayant Mahadik participated in the ADMM Plus (ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus) Exercise on Maritime Security and Counter Terrorism (Ex MS & CT) in Brunei from 01-05 May 16.

During the last five years, the Ministerial visits from India to Brunei were: Shri Vyalar Ravi, Minister of Overseas Indian Affairs in December 2009; Shri Sultan Ahmed, Minister of State for Tourism, in January 2010 to attend the ASEAN Tourism Forum (ATF) 2010; Shri E. Ahamed, Minister of State for External Affairs and Shri RPN Singh, Minister of State for Petroleum & Natural Gas, in September 2011. Shri SM Krishna, External Affairs Minister (EAM), visited Brunei on 19-20 October, 2012. This was the first time that EAM visited Brunei on a bilateral visit. Shri Salman Khurshid, EAM visited Brunei from 28 June to 2 July, 2013 to participate in the ASEAN-India Post-Ministerial Conference/20<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and 3<sup>rd</sup> East Asia Summit (EAS) Foreign Ministers' Meeting. Shri Anand Sharma, Commerce & Industry Minister, led an Indian delegation to 11<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Economic Ministers' meeting in Brunei on 17-21 August, 2013. The delegates participated in Prep ASEAN-India TNC & SEOM preparatory meeting also. Shri Jitendra Singh, Minister of State for Defence and Youth Affairs and Sports (IC), attended the 2<sup>nd</sup> ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus in Brunei on 28-29 August, 2013. Shri Ravi Shankar Prasad, Minister of Communications & IT and Law and Justice accompanied by a high-level delegation visited Brunei to attend the Asia Pacific Telecommunity ICT Ministerial Meeting held in Brunei on 10-11 September, 2014.

Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh led the Indian delegation to the 11<sup>th</sup> ASEAN-India Summit and 8<sup>th</sup> EAS Summit held in Brunei on 9-10 October, 2013. This was the first-ever visit of Prime Minister to Brunei.

Shri Anil Wadhwa, Secretary (East), paid a visit for Consultations meetings held with Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MOFAT) in Brunei Darussalam on 7-8 March, 2015. A delegation comprising of 16 senior officers from the National Defence College (NDC) of India headed by Shri A. Tripathi, IAS, Senior Directing Staff (SDS) including four officers from Bhutan, Japan, Myanmar and Tanzania visited Brunei Darussalam from 18-21 May, 2015. A delegation from Royal Brunei Armed Forces (RBAF) Command and Staff Course-5 (CSC-5) visited India on 10-17 May, 2015 as part of their annual Study Tour.

**Visit of Hon'ble Vice President of India to Brunei Feb 1-3, 2016:** Hon'ble Vice President Shri M. Hamid Ansari visited Brunei from Feb 1-3, 2016. This was the highest level bilateral visit from India to Brunei. During the visit, Hon'ble Vice President called on HM, the Sultan, and the Crown Prince. The Speaker of the Legislative Council of Brunei called on him. Three MOUs viz. on Defence Cooperation, Cooperation in Health Sector and on Cooperation in Youth Affairs and Sports were signed. Hon'ble Vice President delivered a lecture at the University of Brunei Darussalam (UBD) on the topic: "India and Brunei: Partners in Peace and Prosperity". Members of the Brunei India Friendship Association (BIFA) as well as Indian Chamber of Commerce also called on the Hon'ble Vice President.

The High Commission organized an "Essay Contest" commemorating the 125<sup>th</sup> Birth anniversary of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. The Mission also celebrated the Second International Day of Yoga on 19<sup>th</sup> June, 2016 at the India House at Bandar Seri Begawan which was attended by about 150 people.

## **Commercial:**

India- Brunei trade figures are given below (Source DGCIS):

(Value: Million US\$)

	<b>2013-14</b>	<b>2014-15</b>	<b>2015-16</b>	<b>2016-17 (up to June 2016)</b>
Indian Exports	32.45 (-18.91%)	41.98 (+29.36%)	25.71 (-38.75%)	6.32 (-75.41)
Indian Imports	763.62 (-6.28%)	840.88 (+10.11%)	554.01 (-34.11)	65.07 (-88.25)
<b>Total trade</b>	<b>796.07</b> (-6.87%)	<b>882.86</b> (+10.90%)	<b>579.72</b> (-34.33%)	<b>71.39</b> (-87.68)

The major imports of India from Brunei are of crude oil. We imported 1280.94 TMT of crude oil worth Rs. 5274.26 (US \$ 787.79) in 2014-15 and 1268.90 TMT of crude oil valued at 3220.50 (US \$ 481.02 million). As per statistics released by the Brunei's Department of Economic Planning and Development (DEPD), in May 2016, India was the second highest destination of exports at 15.7% after Japan at 37.3%.

The reasons for low level of Exports from India is mainly due to relatively high shipping costs and Brunei's small population base of 422,000. Due to the small size of demand, most of the consumer goods from India are received in Brunei through re-exports via Malaysia and Singapore. Our main exports to Brunei consist of transport equipment, meat and meat products and gems & jewellery highly qualified professionals and skilled/semi-skilled workers. We are making efforts to expand our exports to Brunei and exploring the possibilities of exporting the pharmaceutical products, rice, sugar etc. Five reputed pharmaceutical companies visited Brunei in July 2016 and held discussions with the Bruneian authorities for supply of pharmaceutical products etc to Brunei.

## **Cultural:**

**Negara Brunei Darussalam**, i.e., "State of Brunei - Abode of Peace", or "Brunei Darussalam", or just "Brunei", is one of the oldest continuing monarchies in the world and one of the few executive ones. Its earliest known history dates back to 6<sup>th</sup> century, when Brunei was called "Puni" (possibly a distortion of the Sanskrit "Baruni"), or "Poli". Brunei, then a Hindu-Buddhist kingdom, had linkages with the famed Sri Vijaya and Majapahit empires of the region, as well as with China. In the late 14<sup>th</sup> century, Brunei converted into an Islamic Sultanate when its ruler, Awang Alak Betatar, married a Muslim Johore princess from Malacca, and embraced Islam to become Brunei's first Sultan – Mohammed Shah. Malay customs, rituals and culture have many linkages with Indian culture. Bollywood film stars, movies and filmy music are also very popular.

## **ASEAN-India**

To mark the 20<sup>th</sup> year of ASEAN-India Dialogue and the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of ASEAN-India Summit, a Manipuri Dance recital featuring Priti Patel and Anjika Group performed in Brunei on 30 November, 2012. An ASEAN-India Art Exhibition '*Merging Metaphors*' exhibiting

art works of artists from ASEAN and India was organized at Waterfront Gallery, Bandar Seri Begawan on 6-13 December, 2012. Indian Naval Sail Training Ship *Sudarshini* paid a port call at Brunei from 21-24 November 2012 and a nine-member Bruneian team participated in the ASEAN-Indian Car Rally. A cultural troupe from Brunei joined the Gala Dinner festivities during the Commemorative Summit in December 2012.

The Sultan participated in the ASEAN-India Commemorative Summit held in New Delhi on 20-21 December, 2012. He was accompanied by a high-level delegation which included the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade II and Minister of Finance II at Prime Minister's Office. Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade II Pehin Lim Jock Seng led the Bruneian delegation to the 2<sup>nd</sup> India-ASEAN Business Fair in New Delhi which included Pehin Mahdini, the Chairman of Brunei India Friendship Association (BIFA) and Mr. Nazeer Ahmed, President of Indian Chamber of Commerce in Brunei.

Dato Erywan, Permanent Secretary (ASEAN) at Ministry of Foreign Affairs & Trade visited India to represent Brunei at Delhi Dialogue VI held in New Delhi on 6-7 March, 2014. 25 students from Brunei visited India under the ASEAN-India Student Exchange Programme on 9-18 November, 2014 and covered the cities of Agra, Mumbai, Hyderabad and New Delhi.

### **Indian Community:**

The discovery of oil in Brunei in 1929 brought a number of Indians to Brunei to work in the hydrocarbon sector and allied services. Shri Mohinder Singh, now a Bruneian citizen, was awarded the Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award (PBSA) 2010 in acknowledgement of his outstanding achievements in the field of community service. Indian Association in Bandar Seri Begawan and Indian Association in Kuala Belait have been very active and are regularly organising Indian cultural events. There is an Indian Chamber of Commerce as well as Brunei India Friendship Association (BIFA). Majority of the doctors in Brunei are from India. Other professionals include engineers, IT professionals, bankers, teachers etc. Indians have a considerable presence in textile business. There are approximately 11,000 Indian nationals living and working in Brunei.

### ***Useful Resources:***

High Commission of India, Brunei Darussalam website:

[www.hcindia-brunei.org.bn](http://www.hcindia-brunei.org.bn)

High Commission of India, Brunei Darussalam website Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/HCI-BRUNEI?ref=hl>

High Commission of India, Brunei Darussalam website *Twitter*:

<https://twitter.com/hicomindBrunei>

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